usually witnessed by large crowds of spectators from all parts of the Jaintia parganas.

"Sometimes the supply of voluntary victims fell short, or victims were needed for some special sacrifice promised in the event of some desired occurrence, such as the birth of a son, coming to pass. On such occasions, emissaries were sent to kidnap strangers from outside the Jaintia Raj, and it was this practice that eventually led to the annexation of the country by the British. In 1821, an attempt was made to kidnap a native of Sylhet proper, and while the agents employed were punished, the Raja was warned not to allow such an atrocity to occur again. Eleven years later, however, four British subjects were kidnapped in the Nowgong district, and taken to Jaintia. Three of them were actually sacrificed, but the fourth escaped, and reported the matter to the authorities. The Raja of Jaintia was called on to deliver up the culprits, but he failed to do so, and his dominions were in consequence annexed in 1835."[1]

There seems to be an idea generally prevalent that the Raja of Jaintia, owing to his conversion to Hinduism, and especially owing to his having become a devotee of the goddess Kali, took to sacrificing human victims; but I find that human victims were formerly sacrificed by the Jaintias to the Kopili River, which the Jaintias worshipped as a goddess. Two persons were sacrificed every year to the Kopili in the months *U' saiwing* and *U' sni prah* (November and December). They were first taken to the *hat* Mawshai, or Shang-pung market, where they were allowed to take any eatables they wished. Then they were conducted to Sumer, and thence to Ka Iew Kolh, where a stone on the bank of a small river which falls into the Kopili is pointed out as having been the place where the victims were sacrificed to the Kopili river goddess. Others say that the sacrificial stone was situated on the bank of the Kopili River itself. A special clan in the Raliang doloishiip used to carry out the executions. It seems probable that the practice of sacrificing human victims in Jaintia was of long standing, and was originally unconnected with Hinduism, although when the Royal family became converts to Hinduism, the goddess Kali may easily have taken the place of the Kopili

[1] Gazetteer of Sylhet, Vol. I, Appendix, List of Chiefs, etc., p. xxv

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River goddess. Many of the Syntengs regard the River Kopili to this day with superstitious reverence. Some of these people will not cross the river at all, others can do so after having performed a sacrifice with goats and fowls. Any traveller who wishes to cross the river must leave behind him the rice which he has taken for the journey, and any other food supplies he may have brought with him. This superstition often results in serious inconvenience to travellers between the Jaintia Hills and North Cachar, unless they have arranged for another batch of coolies to meet them on the Cachar side of the River Kopili, for the Synteng coolies throw down their loads at the river side, and nothing will induce them to cross the river. The Kopili is propitiated by pujas in many parts of the Jaintia Hills, and at Nartiang a tank where sacrifices are regularly performed is called Ka Umkoi Kopili.

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WORSHIP OF NATURAL FORCES AND OF DEITIES.

133 In the Khasi Hills, especially on the southern side, there are numerous rivers, sometimes of considerable size, which find their way to the Sylhet plains through very deep valleys, the rivers flowing through narrow channels flanked by lofty cliffs which rise to considerable altitudes. The scenery in the neighbourhood of these beautiful rivers is of the most romantic description, and the traveller might imagine himself in Switzerland were it not for the absence of the snowy ranges. Of such a description is the scenery on the banks of the river Kourhi-
• 823 yong, the Jádukáti* or Punatit of the plains. It is in the bed
776 of the river, a few miles below Bilang, that there is the
782 curiously-arched cavity in the rock which resembles an up-turned boat, which the Khasis call *Ka lieng blei* (the god-boat), and the plains people Baslanya's ship. Near to this, on the opposite side of the river, there is a rock bearing a Persian inscription, but so defaced by the action of the water as to be impossible to decipher. Like other inhabitants of mountainous countries, the Khasis reverence the spirits of fell and fell, and
226 propitiate them with offerings at stated times. A brief descrip-
782 tion of the ceremonies which are performed at Bilang, on the
776 occasion when the annual fishing in the river Punatit takes
787 place, may be of interest. The three Siems of Nongstoin, Langrin, and Nobosdpoh each sacrifice a goat to *Ka blei sum um* (the goddess of the river) before the boatmen can cast in their nets. In former times they say the passage up the river was obstructed by the goddess, who took the form of an immense crocodile: but she was propitiated by the gift of a goat, and the boatmen were then allowed to pass up the river in their boats. Hence it became necessary for the owners of the fishery to sacrifice annually a goat each to the goddess. At the time of my visit each Siem's party erected an altar in the bed of the river, in the midst of which a bough of the Khasi oak (*dieng saing*) was planted. The goats were then decapitated, it being considered an essential that the head

* Lit.: Cut by magic.

L: Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?

should be severed with one blow. As soon as the head was cut off there was a rush on the part of the sacrificers to see in which direction the head faced. If the head faced towards the north or west, it was considered an evil omen; if it faced towards the south or east, a good omen. The east is a lucky quarter amongst the Assamese also. The people ended up the proceedings by giving a long-drawn-out, deep-toned chant, or *hynthai*. Immediately after the ceremony was concluded hundreds of boats shot out from the numerous creeks, where they had been lying, and fished the river all night, the result being an immense haul, to the delight of the Lyngngams, who were seen next morning roasting the fish whole on bamboo stakes, after which they consumed them, the entrails being eaten with great gusto. Such is the worship of the goddess of the Funatit.

Similar pujas take place among the people of *Wár-ding* (the valley of fire) before they fish in the Khai-mara river and elsewhere in the Khasi Hills. In the Jaintia Hills there is the *nyutung*-worship of the Kopili river, which used to be accompanied by human sacrifices, as has been mentioned above, pp. 102-104. The Myntang river, a tributary of the Kopili, must also be annually appeased by the sacrifice of a he-goat. Numerous hills also are worshipped, or rather the spirits which are said to inhabit them. One of the best known hill godlings is the deity who is thought to inhabit the little wood close to the summit of the Shillong Peak. This deity is said to have been discovered by a man named "U Shillong," who gave his name to the Shillong Peak, and indirectly to our beautiful hill station. The Siems of Mylliem and Nongkrem reverence *U'lei Shillong*, and there are certain clans who perform periodical sacrifices to this god. Probably the origin of the superstitious reverence with which U'lei Shillong is held by the Siems of Nongkrem and Mylliem is that their fabled ancestress "Ka Pah Syntiew," of whom an account will be found in the folk-lore section, took her origin from a rock not far from the Shillong Peak in the Nongkrem direction.

Rableng Hill, which is within full view of the Shillong Peak in an easterly direction, is also said to be the abode of a minor god who is periodically propitiated by the members of the Máwthoh clan of the Khyrim State with a he-goat and a cock.

Apparently no special puja is performed to U Kyllang (the Kyllang Rock) nowadays.

The picturesque hill of Synyar, which rises abruptly from the plain in the Township of Mairang, is visible for many miles. It is in shape not unlike the Kyllang. Synyar is said to be the abode of a god called "U Synyar." There is a folk-tale that Kyllang and Synyar fought a great battle, and that the numerous holes in the rocks at the base of the Synyar hill are evidences of their strife. At the base of Synyar there is a great cave, where many cattle find shelter in rainy weather. The people of Mawsynram propitiate the god of Synyar in cases of sickness by sacrificing a bullock or a bull. Synyar, like U Ioi Shallang, is one of the minor deities of the Khasis.

Close to Shangpung, in the Jaintia Hills, there is a small hill called "*u kiew pyrdieng khei kposhah*," where sacrifices are offered on an altar at seed time and when the corn comes into ear. This altar used to be overshadowed by a large oak tree. The tree is now dead.

The Waterfall of Nongpi worship "*u khi kposhah*," the tutelary deity of the village, under the spreading roots of a large rubber tree which gave the name to this village Nongpi. This village worship is performed by a village priest (*kposhah*) at stated intervals, or whenever it is considered necessary. There are numerous other instances of hills and rivers being regarded as the abode of godlings, but those quoted above are sufficient for purposes of illustration.

RELIGIOUS RITES AND SACRIFICES, DUPLICATION.

The Khasis, as has been explained already, worship numerous gods and goddesses. These gods and goddesses are supposed to exercise good or evil influence over human beings according to whether they are propitiated with sacrifices or not. They are even supposed to possess the power of life and death, over men and women, subject to the control of a *Khi Nongthaw*, God the Creator. Thus illness, for example, is thought to be caused by one or more of the spirits on account of some act or omission, and health can only be

wonderful rose of granite known by the name of the Kylliang Rock will be found in the section of the monograph which deals with geographical distribution. I have also added a photograph of the rock. The Syntengs have a story that when the strong east wind blows in the spring this is due to the advent of U Kyllang, who comes to visit his wife, the river Umngot, so that among the Khasis hills are all of them mercilless, but the river is usually considered the feminine gender. U Synger is another isolated rocky eminence rising from the Mairang plain close to the village of K'mawsaw. The best view of the hill is obtainable from Laitmawsiang on the path to Mawryngaw. The village of Mawsmai every traveller from Therria to Cherrapunji knows. It is chiefly remarkable for a fairly large limestone cave, and its fine memorial stones. The Khasi theory to explain how the moon got its spots is, I believe, original, but is no more extraordinary than our own nursery tale about the "man in the moon." The *Sohpet Byrung* hill is the first hill of any size that the traveller sees on the Gauhati road when journeying to Shillong. It is close to Umsning Dak Bungalow. There are caves in the hill which are tenanted by bears. Strange to say, according to Khasi ideas, this is one of the highest points in the hills; in reality *Sohpet Byrung* is some 2,000 ft. lower than the Shillong Peak. As mentioned elsewhere, the Khasis are very fond of dogs; so I have given their version of how the dog came to live with men. The well-known Shaw superstition will be found fully described under the heading of "Human sacrifices." I have, however, thought the tale of sufficient interest to reproduce at length here. The story of the river Rapatyllí is a pretty tale, and is just such a one as would appeal to the imagination of mountaineers like the Khasis. The Kopili story is important, in that it indicates the origin of human sacrifices in the Jaintia Hills; it also throws, perhaps, some light on the question of the use to which the flat table memorial stones were put in years gone by. The superstition about the crossing of the Kopili can be vouched for by many who have taken the journey from the Jaintia Hills to North Cachar by the Kopili route. Mawpunkyrtiang is a small village close to Cherrapunji. The weird tale about the Siem of Malyniang is the pride of the Maskut people, for in olden days their King.

(they said) the children had been born of a wonderful woman, who, it seemed very clear, was the daughter of the "god Shillong." Therefore they gladly decided to appoint them Siems in the country of Shillong (i.e. the present Khyrim or c. Mylliem States). The children thus became Siems, and they were called "Ki Siem-Blei" (the god kings) of Shillong.*

U Law Syrem ase Ka Lah Donsha.

The Syntengs give the following explanation of the origin of the Siems of Sohiyngs. There was a man from War Umiet named U Loh Rymdi. He went one day to fish in the Umiet stream. When he had caught only one fish, he returned home. He roasted the fish and placed it on the iyngar (a swinging shelf above the hearth). He forgot that it was there, and did not remember to eat it. The next morning he went out for a walk to the hill. When he returned home in the evening, he found his house had been swept and looked after, and that the rice had been cooked. He was much surprised at this. The next day the same thing happened. When this state of things continued to occur, he made a pretence of going for a walk to the hill and he called his dog. But he concealed himself the whole day outside the village, and when it was

U Law Syrem ase Ka Lah Donsha.

Ki Syntieng ki bataí ia ka jingïeng tyrwa ki Siem Sohiyngs ennoh. La don u wat U War Umiet, uba kyrteng U Loh Rymdi, uba la leit shwai shillong ia ka Wah Umiet; ia ynda la ngat tang kaba kawat u la wan noh sha la iong. Ynda u la syang u la buh noh haiar iyngar ha ka rah. Hangta u la dhot bad um kynnaw shuh ban bám ia ka. Kumta ynda la-shái mynsiep u la leit kái pat sha lum, ia haba u la wan noh la jan mint u la shem ia ka iing jong u ba la sém la sumar bad ka ja ba la ih. Myntaiu u la lyngngoh shillong ka ka long kumne. Ta kum la-shái ka la long kumjuh. Ynda ka shu dum ialong kumne-pa-kumne la bún sin ah, ynda kumta u la leh ia hadi kum u ban sa leit lum, u da ting ia u-kwaw. Hinnei u la rih noh bacuh shi-ongi harud nong, bad ynda la poi ka por shet ja u la wan noh sha iing. Ta mynba u la iob-i ba la

* The Shillong Peak is thought to be the seat of a powerful Siei or god who has his abode in the wood close to the top of the "Peak." Another folk-tale will be found concerning this god.

[illegible] which is called a 'long exit knife or "the
782 to-grat which cuts off the smell." The mean-
ing of this is: the to-grat is similar to the
"scapegrat" which takes the sins of the de-
ceased upon himself.

Among the poor (that is among those who only use wood as well as those who use wood cut with the to exit) there is no funeral.

Now the closest relatives start the fire and after these the children of the deceased, if there are any present, apply fire. The cloth on the upper end of the bamboo poles flame brightly and is burned up in no time. The few clothes of the deceased are also soon in flames and then the actual burning of the body begins.

If the pile of wood catches fire, a rooster or hen point is sacrificed immediately. This rooster is swung three times over the funeral pyre just as one swings incense and its blood is smeared three times on the pyre. Then the "stomach egg" (long kyit) is broken at the head end of the funeral pyre. Then three arrows ('nan tyaung) [illegible] are thrown by hand as far as one can in three directions. One to the east, one to the south, and the third to the north. But never to the west. Because according to the belief of the Khasi the west leads to the unending, thither go the souls of the dead, there lies eternity. (30)

30. When the Khasi would like to have somebody go far away and they curse him, they speak as follows: to leit sha ten ap ka ongi shaba nih ; bnai, i.e., go away where the sun sets and the moon rises!

(Go away where the sun sets.)